

Studies in theology

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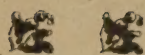
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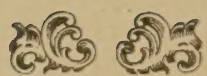
STUDIES
—IN—
THEOLOGY.



✓
WM. ASHMORE,
SWATOW.



The China Baptist Publication Society,
CANTON.



THE STARTING POINT IN THEOLOGY,
BEING A
PRELIMINARY CHAPTER
TO
AN OUTLINE OF THEOLOGY
FOR THE USE OF
OUR CHINESE STUDENTS AT SWATOW.

Men naturally start out in any line of inquiry, from what they see and observe around them. From the near they reason to the distant; from the immediate to the remote; from the visible to the invisible; from the comprehended to the uncomprehended; from the material to the immaterial; from the terrestrial to the celestial; and from the human to the divine.

And this order of procedure is true in each and every one of the sciences without variation. It is a logical necessity in the case of the minor sciences,—in the case of the higher sciences, such as astronomy, and in the case of the very highest, and the crowning, and the all-embracing of all the sciences—THE SCIENCE OF THEOLOGY.

Theology is the Science of God.

By that we mean a classified statement of all the facts we can learn about God,—about himself personally; the mode of his being; the works of his hands; the creations he has made; the nature of his attributes; the administration of his government; the relation he sustains to his universe that he has made, and to the creatures that are in it; together with his plans and purposes—so far as is proper and possible for us to know them; and as a consequential result, a classified statement of our own attitudes, feelings and actions due to himself in consequence of his being God over all blessed forever more, and to our fellow-creatures as being made of one blood for to dwell on all the face of the earth.

All Questions Reducible to Four.

In the case of any human inquiry, multitudinous questions arise. But in conformity with the laws of generalization everywhere in op-

eration, the many questions may be reduced to the few. This simplifies the pursuit of knowledge and contributes to unification. These four questions are :

*The Whence ;
The How ;
The Why or Wherefore ; and
The Whither.*

Application to the Physical Sciences.

All the physical sciences and all human philosophy in their final syntheses concern themselves with asking the *Whence*, or the origin of all things ; the *How* of all things, or the manner of their construction and the mode of their being ; the *Why or Wherefore* of all things, or the reason for their being what they are and as they are ; and, finally, the *Whither* of all things, or what is to be the final future. Philosophy concerns itself mostly with the "Whence" and the "Why," but not much with the "How" or the "Whither." Science, on the other hand, concerns itself with the "How," confining itself to matter of actual fact, and has less to do with the "Why" and still less with the "Whither."

Application in Theology.

When it comes to Theology, we are compelled to ask ourselves these same four questions, first of all as regards the material universe. What is the origin of all that we see? Did all things come by chance? We say, No! Are they eternal? Again we say, No! Were they created? They must have been. Then, who made them? And what kind of a being must he be who did make them? We can reason it all out from the light of nature. The Creator must be a person of infinite will power ; of an infinite physical power ; of an infinite wisdom ; of an infinite presence ; he must fill all time and all space. So much we are certain of. Now, the consuming question is : We have postulated that a being of a certain kind must exist of absolute necessity ; where shall we find him? And who can tell us what his plans and purposes are? Where shall wisdom be found, and where is the place of understanding?

But now again the whole matter comes home to us with tenfold power when we begin to apply these questions to our own personal selves. Whence are we? How do we exist? Why and wherefore do we exist? And what is to become of us by and by? Who can answer the question of the eternal Whither? Most of all, we are sinners. We have a heritage of misery and suffering. Yet it is plain we were made for something different. How did we become sinners? Who can tell us? And who can tell us how to escape from sin? Who can hold out to us a hope of the future, and that it may be well for us in the infinite beyond? These are the questions of life and death. Unless we are like the beasts that perish, we will want to look into them. Our anxiety is aroused, and we cannot afford to sleep again. Sleep now would be the stupor of death.

The Search for Light.

People who have needed and desired wisdom have gone travelling around the world to seek for it. This did the wise men of old. This we will do now. Not that we need to go in person, but we will interrogate those who profess to be guides to them that sit in darkness. We will seek out the great teachers of religion; the great leaders in philosophy; the great discoverers in science, and sit at their feet while we put to them the great questions of the human intellect and the human heart—*Whence? How? Why? and Whither?*

- I. The answer given by ancient Heathenism.
- II. The answer given by Hinduism.
- III. The answer given by Buddhism.
- IV. The answer given by Confucianism.
- V. The answer given by the men of Philosophy.
- VI. The answer given by the men of Science.

Our search has ended in nothing. Physicians of no value are they all to a sin-sick and perishing soul. Foot-sore and weary we come back—our pilgrim staff and pouch we throw on the ground in despair, and repeat the old question, “*Whence then cometh wisdom?*” Destruction and death say, we have heard the fame thereof with our ears, but surely it is hid from the eyes of all living.

No. There Is One Teacher More—THE BIBLE.

There is yet a unique and wonderful book called the Bible. It professes to be able to satisfy human desires, and the human sense of intellectual need. It professes to tell us the *Whence*, and the *Why*, and the *Wherefore* of all things created. It starts us on the *How* and leaves us to work on the remainder for ourselves. If it did not, the men of Philosophy, and the men of Science would have nothing to do. Most of all, it tells us about an infinite, a living and all-powerful Creator, exactly the kind that we have postulated must exist; and it tells us all about sin and how to escape it and become blessed forever and ever.

This must be the book we want. To it we now apply ourselves.

STUDIES IN THEOLOGY,

FOR THE USE OF

OUR CHINESE STUDENTS AT SWATOW.

Our Text Books.

Two books of God ; the unwritten book of Nature, and the written book of Revelation. They throw light upon each other. The former teaches the "Eternal Power and Godhead," but beyond that is inadequate. The latter supplements the former ; is a key to its understanding ; advances immensely beyond ; and brings life and immortality to light. It is the latter we are now to study.

Contents of the Bible—Divisions and Classifications.

DIVISION FIRST.—"Before the World was"—that is, before there was any Kosmos of any kind. "The beginning," when God created the Heavens and the Earth ; through the fall of the angels ; the creation and fall of man, and down to the execution of the death sentence upon the entire race, in the days of Noah ; after which the survivors are allowed to make a new start with the benefit of a new and terribly impressive experience to impel them to avoid evil and pursue the good.

STUDY I.

The Self-Existent, Infinite and Eternal God.

It is expedient that we begin with as full as possible a preliminary study of the character of the living God. To this end we need to glance through the book in advance and bring together a sufficient number of representative passages to set the Supreme Personality before us in something of its awful majesty and effulgent glory. We need to pursue all our studies from a clear and lofty perception of the Infinite One, whose name is holy, and who inhabiteth eternity. Full and adequate conceptions we do not expect to get. Not even angels have that ; but even though meagre the view we get, it will have something of symmetry and proportion, and form a guiding standard to go by in all our other researches. And then, too, it will be starting from the centre, and all our thought will be radiating from that true centre outward.

God exists in plural form.—At the very outset the fact is revealed to us, "Let us make man in our image." Who compose the "us" and the "our" in this case ? We are brought to face the sublime but mysterious doctrine of the Trinity. "God said unto my God." Yet diversity there is none ; there is plurality of Personality, but unity of Being. At the beginning of creation the bare fact of plurality is all that we know. As revelation advances the nature of the distinction becomes apparent. First of all, there is *God*. Then there is *God the Father*, and *God the Son* ; and afterwards, *God the*

Holy Spirit, and these three are one. A recognition of the doctrine of the Trinity belongs to the most primary cognations in Theology, and is not to be put off till the last, as is commonly done, for the reason already given that Revelation puts it in the forefront; and for the further reason that a knowledge of it will help us to avoid confusion from what might otherwise seem incongruous or paradoxical, as in the sentence above given, "The Lord said unto my Lord." The whole of the Old Testament can be read more discerningly.

Before there was any Kosmos, the members of the Trinity were blessed in each other with an inconceivable glory. The glory of the created universe is not to be compared to it. Yet it was and is something that can be apprehended by a loftily endowed intelligence. And so Christ prayed that his disciples be with him to behold the glory which he had with the Father before the Kosmos was. Glimpses of this kind must enter into our conception of God and of the Godhead.

The designations of the Supreme Being are scattered all the way along through his Word. We must gather some of them together also at the start, that we may have ourselves somewhat informed of the titles of the Infinite Majesty into whose presence we are asking to be ushered, for that is a usage among royal and imperial persons. We need to study the meaning of the principal titles and ascriptions one by one. We will bare our heads and take off our shoes before we tread on such holy ground. He is known as the Highest; the Most High God; the Creator of Heaven and Earth; the God of Heaven; the Judge of all the Earth; Jehovah of Hosts; the Faithful God which keepeth Covenant; that Glorious and Fearful Name; the One who dwelleth in light inaccessible, whom no man hath seen or can see; He who inhabiteth eternity; the High and Lofty One whose name is Holy; as the names are given in the Old Testament, Jehovah Elohim El Shaddai, or, as rendered in Revelation, the Lord God Almighty.

Special papers on the subject (in print) are, "Eternal Sonship," "From Everlasting to Everlasting," "The Plan of the Ages of Ages," and others, all bearing more or less on pre-mundane conditions.

STUDY II.

"The Host of Heaven" --The Angels.

These are next to be mentioned. They were the beginning of the creation of God. They were in existence before the Heavens and the Earth were made, for when God laid the foundation of the Earth, these angels, called "Morning Stars," sang together for joy.

In number they are countless—for we read of the "innumerable company of angels." God does not create by halves. Everything is on a stupendous scale. The chariots of God are twenty thousand; thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.

The capabilities and attainments of angels must almost defy human conception.—A human being highly gifted with intellectual powers,

in the course of the few tens of years allotted to him, will amass an amazing amount of knowledge; this he does under difficulties and hindrances, and with all the inevitable interruptions required for rest and other duties. What must be the measure of acquisition of an angel with tens of thousands and possibly millions of years at his command, with the range of the universe before him, and with no sick spells nor periods of exhaustion? We are quite prepared for Biblical statements of their achievements, and of their command over the forces of nature. One of them, though there may have been others assisting, destroyed the first-born of Egypt in a night; another slew a hundred and eighty-four thousand in one night. They can handle lightning, raise storms and tempests; they can come and go with the quickness of a flash of lightning.

There are ranks and gradations among them.—There are mighty archangels. There is Michael, "the chief prince;" and Gabriel, "that stands in the presence of God;" there are "mighty angels," that handle mill-stones like pebbles; there are "angels that excel in strength;" there are "thrones and dominions and principalities and powers;" they can be sent—twelve legions of them—at an instant's notice, if need be.

These angels are in continuous and exalted employment.—They are not made to be idlers. They were doubtless from the very beginning in God's service as instruments, messengers and agents. That they executed lofty commissions in the various processes of creation is a thing that may be assumed as certain. They are now employed as agents of Christ in executing redemption. They appear on all sorts of occasions, and in all kinds of God's work—caring for "the little ones" and the saints—and they will fill a mighty place at the general judgment.

Since we are to meet them at every turn in the Bible, it is well that we gather up, in advance, a number of passages about them also, that we may come to know them well.

STUDY III.

The Creation of the Heaven and the Earth.

This followed after the creation of the angels. The only way we can know about it is by taking the word of the Creator himself. If we do not believe him we shall blunder in the dark and make fools of ourselves. There is a great deal we are left to find out for ourselves by wearisome and protracted study; but there is a great deal more, connected with the various beginnings of things, that we must take purely on Faith. *Faith is a source of knowledge*—the most fruitful of all our sources—and than which there is none more reasonable. We come to know things by personal investigation for ourselves, or by asking some one who knows what we do not know. By faith on our part, his knowledge becomes our knowledge. That the knowledge acquired by faith may be more complete than that acquired by observation is apparent in every day experience. We may inspect a complicated machine and think we know all about it, but the maker

of it can tell us things we had not dreamed of. So it is in our knowledge of the creation. *The method of Faith* and the *method of Science*, in the acquisition of knowledge, are opposite. A geographer who wishes to become acquainted with the features of a great river, has two ways of doing it. He may go to the source and follow the stream down to its mouth, or he may begin at the mouth and trace it up to its source. The one is the "A priori" method, the other is the "A posteriori" method. In the school of faith we start from what God says and follow down; in the school of science we start from what we can see, and try to grope our way upward. If we succeed, we shall end with—God, which is where the believer began. This sore travail hath God given to the men of science to be exercised therewith.

Thus, for example: "By faith we understand (or perceive) that the worlds (or the ages) have been framed by God's word, so that what is seen has not arisen out of things which do appear." Science is lately laying stress upon the fact that we only know phenomena and do not know essential substance. The germ of this truth was formulated in the school of faith eighteen hundred years ago. There may have been forms of matter which preceded the forms we see now. We must take God's word for this.

As to the *method of creation*, we are told a few things only in the first of Genesis. Things were not all made at once. There were stages and processes, and breaks apparently, and resumptions of the work; interposition after interposition of the divine decree, "Let there be." Each time this sentence was spoken there commenced a new series of changes and operations, superadded to all that had gone before, and the series kept mounting upward towards a terminus not yet perceived. Our convenient expressions, "day and night," are used to describe these periods of unequal and unknown duration; but as to detail we are not informed. The word "day" may have a double reference—to some vast megacosmic stretch of creative energy, and partially at least of some subsequent microcosmic repetition. But on that we are, as yet, left to conjecture and study. That many of these creative processes were of an everlasting nature is easily acceptable from what we see of God's method of working in our own day. Only we are to keep in mind that there are the kindred volutions—involution, convolution, and evolution—and that all these are necessary to explain the handiwork of God. The three all pertain to one mechanism. The discoveries of science abundantly bear out the order of creation as presented in Genesis. Vegetable life, animal life, and human life are shown to be conformed to that very order. Each succeeding one may embody features of preceding ones, and yet a distinct creative fiat joins the links of the separate series. "Then the heavens and the earth were finished and all the hosts of them."

See special papers, "Involution, Convolution and Evolution;" "Creative Days;" "Science and Revelation."

STUDY IV.

The Revolt in Heaven.

The bare possibility of such a thing is astounding ; the fact is still more astounding. If holy angels can sin, then who is safe? If heaven is not secure, then where can security be found? Nobody but God is sure of himself. That is true; and therefore God will make the elect sure by taking them into himself. We shall understand this when we come to study "the eternal purpose." The question of *the origin of sin* is not a question of Adam; it is a question of a lofty archangel back of Adam. But how could a pure and holy angel fall into sin? The thought is alarming. Yet an explanation is not so difficult. By means of a little key-sentence given by Paul we begin to apprehend the whole mystery. Timothy is told "not to lay hands on a novice lest being puffed up he fall into the condemnation of the devil." He must not place too much power in a raw recruit lest he cannot stand his promotion, and becoming inflated with self-confidence, he fall, just as the devil fell from an over-estimate of his own importance. We can see it all now. The angels seem to have been all right enough when creation began, but before it was through they had fallen. It is natural to believe that God used them in executing the details of creation, and that lofty commissions were given to them that might involve possibly the nature of a whole planetary or stellar system. In the execution of these commissions they must have exhibited amazing skill and power. How natural for a great angel like "Lucifer, Son of the Morning," to pause to admire the work of his hands, and indulge in feelings of gratification at the result. There is nothing wrong in that thus far. Even God contemplated his own work and pronounced it "good," and "very good." But now God's power is his own, while Lucifer's was not; and when he began to take credit to himself, and began to think what greater things than that he could do if occasion called for it, he was nearing the danger point. He became "puffed up" with a self-generated pride, and over he went. He would himself be "as God," but became instead a *devil*. In his fall he dragged down with him legions of other angels who had become involved with him. This fall of the angels, somewhere midway (?) between the beginning and the consummation of the visible creation, suggests to us a possible explanation of another mystery of Providence—the prevalence of death among the lower forms of creation, before sin entered the Adamic realm. We are told that God cursed the ground for man's sake, and on account of man's sin. If God did that in a later case, why may he not have done the same thing in an earlier case, and have cursed the earth before for the angels' sake? So that, as, in the one case, sin entered and death followed, so in the other case also, sin entered and death followed. It is the old experience repeated—first in the angelic realm, and then in the human realm.

Even though it be purely a speculative matter, it is well for us

to ponder as we pass, the consternation that must have pervaded the host of unfallen angels to see this enormous lapse among themselves. The ambition to be as God involved the certainty of all sin, or of all antagonism to God, and therefore of every opposite of God, and that makes devilism in the full. What must the angels have thought, and how must they have felt, especially when this rebellion must have gone on for possibly myriads of years and yet the issue raised remaining unsettled? Is it possible they could have escaped collisions? and if collisions at all, they must have been fearful; "Michael fought and his angels," and "the devil fought and his angels," is not a mere figure of speech as regards the unseen world of spirits. All the rebellions and mutinies and insurrections that ever took place in all the world since time began, if rolled into one, could not equal that one among mighty angels. It may fill a second place in our comprehension of theology, but it fills a tremendous place in the theology of eternity. Some day that consternation must be quieted down, but not yet, and not without human intervention.

STUDY V.

Adam, the Red-Clay Man, and Eve, his Wife.

And the marvelous series of living creatures, covering ages upon ages in their production, is capped with a man made out of the ignoble dust of the earth, and whose name means "red clay." The work of creation, thus far, ends in that. Is it a fiasco? Far from it. As God said to Moses, "Now thou shalt see what I shall do." We shall see what God is going to bring to pass through the agency of the red clay man.

Adam was not an evolution. He was a separate and distinct creation. God *made* him. Let us *make* man, not let us evolve man. He made him out of the dust. Dust usually means a variety of particles of one kind and another brought together. We do not lay stress on it and presume there is a parable when there is none; but in the make up of Adam's corporal system, and, to a small extent of his intellectual, he is a combination of outlines and designs which preceded him; but that does not make the former to be the progeny of the latter. An architect may incorporate in a clipper some of the sailing lines he has already developed in a canoe, but that does not make the clipper the creator of the canoe. God made man with his own hands, and then breathed into him the breath of life, and he became a living soul.

Adam was made in the image and likeness of God. He was modeled in his soul's make-up, in a faint degree, after the nature of God himself. He was not simply mankind—he was Godkind. A child has the nature, the tastes, the proclivities and the faculties of the father that begat him, and is fitted to be a companion to that father when he is developed and grown up. It was so with Adam. He would be a companion in kind to God. God could make a companion of his red-clay child, not by reason of the clay that was in

him, but by reason of the spirit and the faculties that were breathed into him—all and not a part of a lofty nature. He could think God's thoughts over again; he could feel God's feelings over again; he could follow God's ways, and imitate God's works, in a small way. He could, as he was educated, understand God and appreciate God and be in sympathy with God. And God had already commenced his education and had begun to make a companion of him. He walked with him, and talked with him, and gave him lessons in the knowledge of creative life to begin with. Adam was the son of God, and not the son of an ape, or the son of an anthropoid, as some men of science declare themselves to be.

The man Adam was endowed with dominion as part of his birth-right, and for which his eminent natural faculties qualified him. He began to exercise his right of dominion by giving names to the animals that were made to pass before him. How much of dominion over nature and the elements of nature this grant included is not even yet made known. It is only beginning to appear in the marvelous progress of this generation. But it was all in the original grant, or it could never have been gotten out of it, as is now being done.

Adam was put in a garden to dwell. This was a special place fitted up for his abode. It was not a natural part of the creation, but a space that had been planted. It seems therefore to have been a representative garden—that is, representative plants and trees were all there, and faithfulness in regard to them and the right use of them, would, presumably, have consummated and constituted his right and title to the whole earth. Eden was a place of probation.

Eve, the mother of all living, was not made, as was Adam, out of clay. She was taken from his side, a procedure which had a profound typical significance of a relation which in the mind of God existed in regard to the coming Christ and the future Church, his bride. Eve came only because Adam preceded and included her; the fallible Church of Christ was permitted to exist simply because, in the plan of God, the Redeemer preceded her. The Church was in Christ as Eve was in Adam. This is a great mystery, but I speak of Christ and the Church.

STUDY VI.

The Man Inoculated with Devil Poison.

It was accomplished by the injection of a doubt—a doubt not started in absolute form to start with, but put in the form of a question—"Hath God said?" When the question had begun to work then it was followed with the assertion, "For God doth know." To be wise like God—what a boon! And then, it was fair to look upon; it was "a tree to be desired." Desire conceived and brought forth sin. Adam was gone.

The exultation of the devils—It must have been great. Seemingly they had beaten the Almighty; their infernal cunning had been too much for his infinite wisdom; the man he had made to take their

place was now himself a sinner. They had robbed God of his new companion. Their walks together in the cool of the day were at an end. Alienation existed between them and, to them, restoration seemed impossible. It was the hour and the power of darkness. The devils were to be no longer alone in their misery. A progeny of lost children of Adam would soon come pouring in upon them, more in number, possibly, than the fallen angels themselves, and every niche in hell would be filled with a victim. Devilism was triumphant.

The consternation of the angels.—If it was great before, it must, in some respects, have been greater now. It may have been known to them that through the clay-man God intended to repeople heaven, but now, all at once, his plans were dashed. He had pronounced "very good" everything he had made in connection with the man, but now the baffled Creator must cease to bless and begin to curse. What could it all mean? Are the devils to reign after all? If God had been baffled in that, what assurance absolute was there that he would succeed in a new attempt? It is legitimate to have such thoughts. We are blinded because we do not try a little to put ourselves in their places and imagine what they thought and how they felt. Their solicitude must have been oppressive and terrible.

The Bible helps us solve the mystery.—We have data now given in revelation and in human history which not even the angels had. God was not being baffled after all. His plans were progressing just as he had intended them. Instead of hindering them, this daring performance of the devil was only helping them on. For now we see some of the purposes which God was intending to accomplish.

(1) God was intending to furnish an answer to all the possible speculative inquiry and conjecture concerning himself that had been or could be made by angels or any other intelligent beings. For why should not the angels indulge in speculative thought, and that without sin, necessarily? Men do it here on earth, and cannot help doing it; indeed, they are made to do it. Why should not angels do it in the invisible world? Their desire to look into things is immeasurably more active than ours, and their field of research is immeasurably more expanded than ours. We can conceive all manner of conjectures about the person of God, the attributes of his nature, and the outcomes of his administrations, which must have presented themselves to the angels. Questions of policy, questions of ethics, questions of rationality, must have presented themselves to their minds just as they do to ours. Indeed, not a few of the issues of rationalism and ethicalism known to ourselves may be only forms of old-time issues raised among the angels, and which may have been discussed threadbare by them before they ever came to us. All these conjectures God has intended to answer at some time or other, in some way or other; but it is certain that some of them cannot be answered without the introduction of Christ, who alone is God's answer to the unsolved problems of eternity. That leads to the next point.

(2) The issues raised by the lapse of the fallen angels were not settled in the invisible world where they occurred; they appear in the light of chronic moral ailments, just as sin has become chronic on earth; but they have all been thrown forward to be fought out here in "time" periods, and under human conditions. In other words, the battle of a past eternity is relegated to us, and is to be fought out in our day. Michael and Satan contended over the dead body of Moses. In like manner the red-clay man and what shall become of his dead body, is the still greater issue between Satan and all his hosts, and Christ, who did not appear as God's champion at the time of the angels' fall, but who does appear now to challenge "the strong man" and dispute his claims. Satan is in possession now, but Christ will have possession in the end. He has come to execute the divinely issued writ of Habeas Corpus. The cavils of the fallen angels are all being reproduced in the thoughts of fallen men, under Satan's suggestion; and before the controversy is ended will all be answered by Christ. God would not reply to the angels direct, but he does reply to them through the medium of the red-clay man.

(3) Through the medium of that same clay man does God mean to destroy the works of the devil and all his hosts, and put an end to their mischief and malignity forever. The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head. What was therefore seemingly a satanic success was, in reality, the beginning of the satanic overthrow. Satan administered the first blow to his own destruction. Out of that weak and ruined man was to come deliverance from the strength of the Almighty for a disordered universe.

(4) And again, that red-clay man was to be the point of departure in a new administration of the universe, and of the setting up of the ultimate and eternal kingdom of God, in which the child of that man should rule over the heavens and the earth, principalities and powers being made subject unto him, and all things being put under his feet. It is a long and a tortuous journey that now lies before the man Adam—a journey through fire and water, through darkness and the shadow of death, but it will all come out right in the end.

STUDY VII.

The Death Sentence Executed.

The day of doom for a fallen race comes slowly, but it comes at last. In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt die. Sin and death had both been working out their direful results ever since the taste of the forbidden tree. The fruit was ripe now, and the harvest is to be gathered. And God said, The end of all flesh is come before me. Behold I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven, and everything that is in the earth shall die. One single family alone was to be spared—that of Noah. He was to build an ark sufficient to hold his family of eight persons and the living creatures that God

should send to him for continuance of existence. All the rest were to die. Desire when it is conceived bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death. Destruction was terrible and complete. All flesh died that moved upon the face of the earth, all in whose nostrils was the breath of life. Every living substance upon the face of the earth was destroyed—man and cattle and creeping things and the fowls of the air. They were destroyed from the earth, and Noah only remained alive and they that were with him in the ark. A hundred and fifty days the water prevailed upon the earth, until nothing was left alive. Their dead corpses sank in the sea or floated upon the waters. A raven sent forth to range over this world-wide graveyard could feel at home on a bloated and blistering corpse, but a dove with its clean instincts could find no rest for the sole of its feet and came back again to the ark for a while longer. The world was dead.

The Moral Significance of the Divine Silence.

We are confronted here with a great moral inquiry. God does not appear to have taken any steps towards the deliverance of this sinful and sinning race during the entire period that elapsed from the fall to the flood—a duration of sixteen hundred and fifty-six years, more or less, according to the way of reckoning chronology. What is the explanation of this? We think an explanation can be only by considering God's plan of the ages, and God's purpose in permitting sin to enter the earth at all, and God's probable plan in dealing with sin.

In pursuance of the eternal purpose, God's providences were steadily advancing towards the ultimate universe already referred to. Features of that ultimate universe were the exaltation of Christ to a new headship over creation—a headship won and acquired, in addition to his headship inherited and by creation; the introduction also, of a new administration in which the impelling power should be love, and not a mere sense of duty; and also the establishment of the saved creature on a basis of safety that should forever render a fall impossible, being made a partaker of the divine nature, and being merged into the very *name* as well as the nature of God—an inconceivable uplift to the creature. The places vacated by the innumerable fallen angels are to be filled with innumerable quickened men, created anew in the likeness of God.

As a step in this wonderful process, it was a part of the eternal purpose to let sin work itself out to the full—to let men first try all their own schemes of deliverance; to give every human plan an opportunity to test itself, every kind of religion, every system of philosophy and every theory of science. When they had failed, and the world by wisdom showed that it knew not God, and could by no means anyone redeem his brother, then they would be prepared to understand and appreciate God's plan as being the only plan. The process of human experimentation has been going on, and is going on still, on the one hand, while God is working out his plan on the other hand.

The first in the series of manifestations of sin and the development of its virulent nature, is discovered in the first period of human history. Adam, had, we are to suppose, a robust, stalwart nature. He had made one mistake. One fang of the serpent's tooth had entered his flesh and had struck into his moral nature. He saw his mistake at once when he discovered he was naked, and was ashamed. But now would the stalwart nature be able, by the preponderance of its virility, to eradicate the one death germ, or would the death germ infect and spread till the whole system was poisoned and corrupted, just as one small injection of small-pox virus soon brings a confluent disease? So God stood aside and allowed the matter to take its course. Can sin wear itself out or exhaust its deadly virus, just as a fever runs its course, burns its material, and then stops? That is to be the question.

The beginning of the answer is given in the history of man before the flood. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil, and that continually." "The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and behold it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted his way on the earth." That one drop of devil poison had infected the entire race unto utter corruption and death. The end came. The divine threat was carried out also to the uttermost.

The Adam Race Makes a New Start.

And now we are to have a new experience of sin. The only surviving family of the human race now knew what death meant in its terrible completeness. They could begin anew and could profit by their knowledge of the past. But now, would they do it? Would they lead a reformed life, or would they soon go astray again? The answer is now to be given, and we are to have a new experience in the deadly pathology of sin.

W. ASHMORE.

Savatoro, December, 1901.

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